

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An estimated price providing apparatus  
comprising:

5 a storage device in which estimated prices that a  
dealer can offer are registered in advance for  
respective predetermined choices in accordance with the  
choices that are set in advance in association with  
article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

10 customize function for allowing a user of an  
information terminal to select an article of desired  
specifications in accordance with the predetermined  
choices by operations from the information terminal  
which is connected via a communication line to allow  
two-way communications; and

15 estimated price providing function for, when the  
article with the desired specifications is selected by  
said customize function or when the user makes request  
operation at the information terminal later,  
calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells  
20 the article with the desired specifications by  
referring to the estimated prices for respective  
choices registered in said storage device in accordance  
with the desired specifications, and providing the  
calculated estimated price per article to the  
25 information terminal.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said  
estimated price providing function provides the

estimated price per article with the desired specifications using an e-mail message in response to user's request operation at the information terminal after said customize function selects the article with  
5 the desired specifications.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least individual storage areas are assured on said storage device in correspondence with a plurality of dealers,

10 said customize function includes dealer select function for selecting a dealer that the user of the information terminal prefers from the plurality of dealers, and

said estimated price providing function provides  
15 the estimated price per article with the desired specifications by referring to the storage area of said storage device, which correspond to the dealer selected by said dealer select function.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said  
20 storage device is managed by a third party different from the plurality of dealers,

said apparatus further comprises estimated price update function for allowing the dealers corresponding to individual storage areas to update storage contents  
25 for respective dealers stored in the individual storage areas of said storage device, and



e-mail message, in which an address that specifies the dealer as a source is set, in response to user's request operation at the information terminal after said customize function selects the article with the  
5 desired specifications.

8. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said estimated price providing function provides all estimated prices per article, which were previously provided to the user, to be able to be displayed as a  
10 list on the information terminal in response to a user's query request at the information terminal.

9. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said estimated price providing function transfers an estimation request of a trade-in article to the dealer  
15 selected by said dealer select function when the estimation request of the trade-in article is received from the user of the information terminal in a process for providing the estimated price per article with the desired specifications to the information terminal.

20 10. The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising estimated price update function for permitting to update storage contents of one of storage areas individually prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers in  
25 response to a request from the dealer corresponding to that storage area, and denying update of the storage

contents of the storage area by another dealer which does not correspond to the storage area.

11. The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said estimated price update function permits to browse the storage contents of one of storage areas individually prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers in response to a request from the dealer corresponding to that storage area, and denies browsing of the storage contents of the storage area by another dealer which does not correspond to the storage area.

12. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said estimated price update function denies update of storage contents of the storage areas individually prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers by the manufacturer.

13. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the article is an automobile, and

the predetermined choices which are set in advance are restricted to customize a backbone that determines drive performance of the automobile as a first step, and are also restricted to select other specifications to have specifications selected in the first step as top priority in subsequent steps when the user of the information terminal customizes an automobile with desired specifications by said customize function.

14. The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said  
customize function executes in turn selection of drive  
system components that form a backbone of the  
automobile which can be manufactured by the  
5 manufacturer, and selection of wheel peripheral  
components registered in advance in correspondence with  
the selected drive system components.

15. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at  
least one of said storage function, said customize  
10 function, and said estimated price providing function  
is managed by the manufacturer.

16. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said  
storage function, said customize function, and said  
estimated price providing function are managed by the  
15 manufacturer.

17. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said  
customize function informs of manufacturer's suggested  
retail prices registered in advance for respective  
choices by the manufacturer in a process in which the  
20 user of the information terminal selects the article  
with the desired specifications, and

said estimated price providing function provides  
the estimated price per article with the desired  
specifications to the information terminal in response  
25 to user's request operation at the information terminal  
after said customize function selects the article with  
the desired specifications.

18. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said  
estimated price providing function provides all  
estimated prices per article, which were previously  
provided to the user, to be able to be displayed as a  
5 list on the information terminal in response to a  
user's query request at the information terminal.

19. An estimated price providing apparatus  
characterized by comprising:

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10 a storage device in which estimated prices that a  
dealer can offer are registered in advance for  
respective predetermined choices in accordance with the  
choices that are set in advance in association with  
article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

15 customize means for allowing a user of an  
information terminal to select an article of desired  
specifications in accordance with the predetermined  
choices by operations from the information terminal  
which is connected via a communication line to allow  
two-way communications; and

20 estimated price providing means for, when the  
article with the desired specifications is selected by  
said customize means or when the user makes request  
operation at the information terminal later,  
calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells  
25 the article with the desired specifications by  
referring to the estimated prices for respective  
choices registered in said storage device in accordance

with the desired specifications, and providing the  
calculated estimated price per article to the  
information terminal.

20. An estimated price providing system, which
- 5 comprises an estimated price providing apparatus and an  
information terminal of a user, which can make two-way  
communications via a communication line, wherein
- said estimated price providing apparatus  
comprises:
- 10 customize function for allowing the user of said  
information terminal to select an article of desired  
specifications in accordance with predetermined choices  
which are set in advance in association with product  
specifications that a manufacturer can supply in
- 15 response to operation at said information terminal; and
- estimated price providing function for, when the  
article with the desired specifications is selected by  
said customize function or when the user makes request  
operation at said information terminal later,
- 20 calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells  
the article with the desired specifications by  
referring to a storage device in which estimated prices  
that a dealer can offer are registered in advance in  
correspondence with the choices, and providing the
- 25 calculated estimated price per article to said  
information terminal, and
- said information terminal comprises:



control function for providing a man-machine interface according to operation of said customize function to the user, and informing the estimated price per article provided by said estimated price providing  
5 function.

21. The system according to claim 20, wherein at least one of said storage function, said customize function, and said estimated price providing function is managed by the manufacturer.

10 22. An estimated price providing method that uses an estimated price providing apparatus and an information terminal of a user, which can make two-way communications via a communication line, comprising:

a customize step of making said information  
15 terminal access said estimated price providing apparatus, and allowing the user of said information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with predetermined choices which are set in advance in association with product specifications  
20 that a manufacturer can supply in response to operation at said information terminal; and

an estimated price providing step of calculating, when the article with the desired specifications is selected in the customize step or when the user makes  
25 request operation at said information terminal later, an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to a

storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer  
can offer are registered in advance in correspondence  
with the choices, and providing the calculated  
estimated price per article to said information  
5 terminal.

23. A computer program instructing a computer to  
operate as an estimated price providing apparatus  
comprising:

a storage device in which estimated prices that a  
10 dealer can offer are registered in advance for  
respective predetermined choices in accordance with the  
choices that are set in advance in association with  
article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

customize function for allowing a user of an  
15 information terminal to select an article of desired  
specifications in accordance with the predetermined  
choices by operations from the information terminal  
which is connected via a communication line to allow  
two-way communications; and

20 estimated price providing function for, when the  
article with the desired specifications is selected by  
said customize function or when the user makes request  
operation at the information terminal later,  
calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells  
25 the article with the desired specifications by  
referring to the estimated prices for respective  
choices registered in said storage device in accordance

with the desired specifications, and providing the  
calculated estimated price per article to the  
information terminal.

24. A computer program instructing a computer to  
5 implement an estimated price providing method  
comprising:

10 a customize step of making an information  
terminal of a user access an estimated price providing  
apparatus, which can make two-way communications with  
said information terminal via a communication line, and  
allowing the user of said information terminal to  
select an article of desired specifications in  
accordance with predetermined choices which are set in  
advance in association with product specifications that  
15 a manufacturer can supply in response to operation at  
said information terminal; and

an estimated price providing step of calculating,  
when the article with the desired specifications is  
selected in the customize step or when the user makes  
20 request operation at said information terminal later,  
an estimated price when the dealer sells the article  
with the desired specifications by referring to a  
storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer  
can offer are registered in advance in correspondence  
25 with the choices, and providing the calculated  
estimated price per article to said information  
terminal.

25. A computer readable storage medium storing a program code which makes a computer operate as an estimated price providing apparatus comprising:

5 a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance for respective predetermined choices in accordance with the choices that are set in advance in association with article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

10 customize function for allowing a user of an information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with the predetermined choices by operations from the information terminal which is connected via a communication line to allow two-way communications; and

15 estimated price providing function for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customize function or when the user makes request operation at the information terminal later, calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells  
20 the article with the desired specifications by referring to the estimated prices for respective choices registered in said storage device in accordance with the desired specifications, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to the  
25 information terminal.